

Examining Affect in Psychometric Schizotypy Using Behavioral Experience Sampling Methodology
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In schizophrenia, patients often experience more negative emotions in the form of anger, sadness, and anxiety when compared to the general population. One unique way of measuring affect outside of the laboratory has been to use Experience Sampling Methods (ESM) to assess how individuals perceive current emotions in their daily life. However, these methods are still subject to self-report bias. In this study, we examined affect using traditional ESM methods while also implementing the Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR), a behaviorally-based ESM measure that provides real-world assessments of speech. To examine the EAR, we evaluated affect in schizotypy and non-schizotypy groups. Research shows that schizophrenia-like experiences, like increased negative affect, run along a continuum. Schizotypy is a category on the healthier end of the schizophrenia-spectrum; it applies to individuals who are thought to have a putative genetic liability for schizophrenia. Using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), we compared affective word usage among schizotypy and non-schizotypy groups to provide a real-world, behavioral ESM measure. When traditional ESM measures were used, we found individuals with schizotypy reported less negative emotions compared to the non-schizotypy group, but results did not reach the level of significance. We also observed that non-schizotypy individuals reported slightly higher positive emotions, and the schizotypy group reported slightly higher negative emotions. A similar pattern was observed when examining EAR data. Overall, results suggested that traditional and behavioral ESM measures of affect had significant overlap. In general, those with schizotypy demonstrated slightly more negative emotion and slightly less positive emotion than the non-schizotypy group. Findings did not reach the level of significance. This study demonstrates that the EAR provides behavioral ratings of affect that are on par with traditional ESM ratings. Future work should examine the EAR at different points on the schizophrenia-spectrum.

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